

Case 74

THE REDEEMER IN THE MIDST OF
THOSE WHO ARE
ASSEMBLED IN HIS NAME.

THE SUBSTANCE OF A

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE OPENING
OF A NEW CHAPEL IN

P I C K E R I N G,
IN THE COUNTY OF YORK;

ON WEDNESDAY APRIL 29th. 1789.

By SAMUEL BOTTOMLEY.

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Published for the Benefit of the Interest there.

Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell
among them.

Exod. 25. 8.

In all places where I record my name, I will come
unto thee and I will bless thee.

Exod. 20. 24.

W H I T B Y:

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TO THE
C H U R C H
AND
C O N G R E G A T I O N
OF
PROTESTANT DISSENTERS
AT
P I C K E R I N G,
IN THE
COUNTY OF YORK,

THIS SERMON IS INSCRIBED,
BY THEIR VERY SINCERE FRIEND
AND SERVANT,

The AUTHOR.

SCARBOROUGH, *June*
26th. 1789.

Matt. 18. 20.

WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED TO-
GETHER IN MY NAME, THERE AM I IN THE
MIDST OF THEM.

WITH heart-felt pleasure, I entered these walls to-day; and now attempt the delightful task which lies before me. My hearers will give me credit when I add, that my pleasure is rather augmented than diminished, by a persuasion in my own breast, that the generality of them feel as I do on the present occasion. Perhaps, my Brethren, you are now recollecting the uncomfortable state in which you were circumstanced, the last year at this time; when you hardly knew how to attempt the business of this building, which is now so happily accomplished. Raise your Ebenezer. Hitherto the LORD hath helped you. Good, supremely good is he; and let his glorious name for ever be adored. I call both upon you and myself, to survey this place of Worship, not so much as it is a monument of their pious zeal, who have so cheerfully lent an helping hand in the performance of so good a work; but rather, as it is a display of that divine goodness which inspired their breasts with a zeal so sacred. From that blessed source have proceeded all the good things that men or Angels ever have attempted. The LORD is as really the author of every good and virtuous work, as he is the Giver of every good and perfect gift. The Church under
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the New Testament dispensation may say, with as much propriety as that under the old, "LORD thou "hast wrought all our works in us." *Isa.* 26. 12. Yes, it is GOD that worketh in us, both to will, and to do, of his good pleasure ; and therefore, the more we do for him, the more we are indebted to him.

BUT to proceed to the business before me, which being somewhat new in this neighbourhood, I am particularly desirous, that it may not be mistaken. Permit me therefore to inform you, that our coming together, to open and set apart this place for the purposes of religious worship, is not under any pretence that we or any human beings under Heaven, call them Bishops, Popes, or what you please, are able to convey the least degree of holiness either to this or any other spot of ground ; no, not by any devices whatsoever. We entertain just as high an opinion of *holy earth* in ENGLAND, as we do of *holy water* in FRANCE, and no higher. The holiness of unconscious elements is regarded by us, as the pitiful, useless, if not iniquitous fancy of fallible men. To inculcate the idea of such imaginary sanctity, would be. in us, a sad attempt, not only to impose on the ignorance and credulity of weak minds, but at the same time grossly to insult the good sense, and infringe the liberty of those persons, daring enough, in such matters, to think and judge for themselves.

UNDER the Old Testament, both persons, places, and many other things were solemnly consecrated

crated for those ceremonial services which the God of Heaven had appointed; which, some think, might denote the solemn separation of JESUS CHRIST and his followers, to the service of GOD; but now the great antitype and substance being come, the ancient types and shadows are all withdrawn; as such, the consecration of Churches, church-yards, and sacramental vessels have no warrant, that we can find, in the New Testament; and therefore we conclude, that they have been derived from the Man of Sin.*

PLACES, in which to assemble for the worship of GOD are very desirable, and those are the best which are best calculated for that purpose. Wherever they

* Dr. CAVE, in his account of primitive Christianity, observes, that Churches being built and beautified, so far as consisted with the ability and simplicity of those Days, the Christians sought to derive a greater value and esteem upon them by some peculiar *Consecration*; for, adds the Dr. the wisdom and piety of those times thought it not enough barely to devote them to the public services of Religion, unless they also set them apart with solemn rites of formal *Dedication*. This says he, had been an ancient custom both amongst Jews and Gentiles, as old as Solomon's Temple; nay, as Moses and the Tabernacle. But mind what follows. *When 'twas first taken up by Christians, is not easy to determine. Only I do not remember to have met with the foot-steps of any such thing in any approved writer, 'till the reign of Constantine.* Now as this great searcher into antiquity has so very little to offer in favor of Consecrations; and as JESUS CHRIST and his Apostles have said nothing at all in their behalf, we think ourselves justifiable in setting our faces against those who insist on their absolute necessity.

they are necessary, we must do all we can to provide them; and when provided, to have the word of GOD faithfully preached in them, and his ordinances duly administered. Thus may we hope for his presence and blessing, who hath said, *Exod. 20. 24.* In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. And again in the words of our text, Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Precious words! Sing O ye Heavens; shout ye lower parts of the earth: Break forth into singing, ye mountains, and forests, and every tree therein; for the LORD JESUS CHRIST hath said, Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. While such declarations sound in our ears, we may banish sorrow from all our hearts, and shout aloud for Joy. The LORD JESUS spake the words as one having authority, and not as the Scribes. Let us consider the dignity of his person, and we shall not doubt the truth of this most gracious declaration. He would not promise what he could not perform. And, having once made a promise, he will always make it good. — In speaking further on the text I will endeavour to point out,

- I. The gathering together intended therein:
- II. The purposes for which JESUS will be there present:
- III. Some inferences deducible from the whole.

I. It can hardly be necessary to observe that it is not every gathering together which is here meant.

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There are assemblies into which our souls must not come: Assemblies to which our honor must not be united. We read of assemblies of *Mockers*, and of *treacherous Men*: Jeremiah preferred the lodging place of way faring men in the wilderness, to such societies. Alas! it is more common for the multitude to assemble together for *carnal*, than *spiritual* purposes: But, we must not follow a multitude to do evil. I doubt, the age in which we live, too much abounds with meetings together, which are not for the better, but the worse. The calling of such assemblies, by advertisements which we often read, and the crowding to places of diversion which we sometimes behold, may entirely supersede the necessity of a further explanation. I know not what business a Christian has with such meetings, unless to signify his disapprobation of them, at least, by denying his presence there. And, let me not forget to say, that there are *even solemn meetings*, which GOD'S Soul hateth. These are the assemblies of hypocritical worshipers: Persons who rest in the form of Godliness, but denying the power thereof. From such we must turn away.

BUT our text sufficiently discriminates the gathering together of which it speaks, by the expressive words *IN MY NAME*; which confine the meaning to those only, which are for the worship of GOD according to the direction which he himself hath given. Such for instance in the

1st. place, Are meetings for prayer to GOD and singing his praises. To such our text immediately refers;

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see

the verse preceeding ; If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father, which is in Heaven. Prayer is the daily and delightful business of every true and lively Christian. If it never could with propriety be said of a sinner before his conversion, it may and will be said after it, as was said of Saul of Tarsus, *Behold he prayeth*. To plead and prevail with God, is the business and blessedness of every true Israelite. Pray always, is one of the sacred and important precepts of the New Testament. JESUS was much in prayer, both private and social ; and hath given us commandment that we should follow his steps. Therefore, prayer meetings are not peculiar to modern times. So early as the days of Enos, Men united in calling upon the name of the LORD. The tabernacle in the days of Moses, was called the *tabernacle of the congregation*, because there the people assembled to pray. The first temple was called the house of prayer. And we read both in *Luke 18. 20.* and *Acts 3. 1.* of persons going up into the second temple to pray. Public prayer is as much a *New*, as it was an *Old* Testament ordinance. When the Disciples returned from seeing the ascension of their LORD and Master on Mount Olivet, they went up into an upper room and there continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of JESUS, and with his brethren. It is likewise recorded of those who were afterwards added to the Church, that they continued stedfastly in prayer. Doubtless the words of our text would afford

ford them great encouragement so to do ; and be it observed, that the same words still hold out the same encouragement to us, and will hold out the same to others when we are gone. Meeting for prayer then, are in the *Name*, i. e. by the authority, and according to the precept and example of our LORD and his Apostles.

I likewise mentioned singing of praise ; and happy are they who sing unto the LORD, and make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let them continue to come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with Psalms. Singing praise to GOD seems to be a part of moral worship, which was practised before the ceremonial law was given ; and consequently continued after it was abolished. Not only did Moses sing with Israel at the Red Sea, but JESUS likewise sung an hymn with his Disciples after he had instituted and celebrated the sacred supper. And Churches under the New Testament are expressly commanded to sing psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs. When we meet to pray with the Spirit, then let us sing with the Spirit, and the understanding also : As such, our hopes of the SAVIOUR'S presence will not be disappointed.

2d. Gathering together to read and hear the word of GOD, is to meet or assemble in the name of CHRIST. The word of GOD is handed down to us as a most valuable treasure, not to be locked up out of our sight, but to be engraven in our very hearts.

The command of CHRIST to the Jews, to *search the Scriptures*, is binding on our consciences, and on the consciences of all wherever the Scriptures come. Moses and the Prophets, the Gospels and Epistles, with all the other parts of Holy Writ, are carefully to be read, as containing a revelation of the mind and will of GOD. Those who will not hear them, would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead. When JESUS went into the synagogue, it was his custom to stand up to read, and then expound what he had read; see *Luke 4. 16*. This ascended SAVIOUR has appointed pastors and teachers in his Church; and having bestowed upon them gifts for the work of the ministry, he has enjoined it upon them to preach, not themselves, but the word: And those who preach the word, must preach CHRIST; because the word is a revelation of him. Where the word of GOD is read and preached, there the name of CHRIST will be recorded, and there will he come and bless. His name will be recorded as a necessary SAVIOUR; for if the word be heard in its full meaning, it will stop every mouth, and prove all men guilty before GOD; and as such, incapable of being justified by the law of Moses. His name will be recorded as a suitable SAVIOUR, having every thing the poor sinner wants; eye-salve to anoint the eyes of his benighted mind, precious blood to cleanse him from all sin, a robe of perfect righteousness to cover his naked soul, power to vanquish all foes; in a word, as having grace to help in every time of need, and a crown of eternal life to bestow after death. His name will be recorded as a loving, willing,

willing, and compassionate SAVIOUR. His love will be displayed as having heights and depths, lengths and breadths infinitely unmeasurable. Likewise as being sovereign, immutable, and without end. It will be shewn, that he is so willing to save, that he came down from Heaven for that very purpose: Yea, to seek and to save that which was lost. For this end he both lived and died, and rose again, and now lives in Heaven. He is equally as willing, as he is able, to save all them to the uttermost, that come unto GOD by him. Nor is he less a compassionate and sympathizing SAVIOUR. His bowels always melt with pity. He weeps with them that weep. As being the Head, he feels what every member suffers. He takes all the kindneses or unkindneses shewn to them that obey him, as if personally done to himself. Thus his name is recorded, wherever his glorious Gospel comes. Who would not then gather together to read and hear the good Word of GOD. But in the

3d. place, I observe we gather together in CHRIST'S name, when we meet for the purposes of religious conversation. David said, Come all ye that fear GOD and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul. In ancient times, they that feared the LORD spake often to one another. They were upon speaking terms, and they so spake as to please the LORD. We are commanded to exhort one another daily, lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. We are likewise to comfort ourselves together, and to edify one another. We are to consider one another to provoke unto love
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and good works ; and not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but to exhort one another, and so much the more as we see the day approaching. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold Grace of GOD. It is not uncommon for men of business and science to have meetings for conference relative to the same. Physicians have their consultations. Lawyers, warriors, and statesmen have derived great advantages from their several councils.—Conferences among Christians are equally proper. They have many enemies to encounter. Many difficulties and dangers in their way through life ; and have need to be wise as Serpents, and at the same time, harmless as Doves ; and, by conversing together they will impart knowledge to one another, so that every one's understanding will be greatly enriched. Let them therefore associate to assist one another, by their best counsel and advice. The Communion of Saints is an article of their Creed, and they need not be ashamed to practise, what they are not ashamed to profess. He who joined the two disciples, when conversing in their way to Emmaus, will not disappoint the expectations of those who hope for his presence in their Christian conferences.

4thly. I observe we gather together in the name of CHRIST when we meet at his table to commemorate his death. This was the last ordinance that CHRIST instituted before he was crucified ; and the observance of it is to be continued 'till he shall come

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at the last day. In the very night in which he was betrayed, when his Soul was overwhelmed with sorrow, he did not forget those who should afterwards, even to the end of the world, remember him.— Then did he spread his table with the most delicious fare for the entertainment of his followers, to the end of their pilgrimage. Let us not make light of this divine repast. CHRIST our passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast: Let us continue stedfastly, not only in the Apostle's doctrine, and fellowship, and prayers; but likewise, in breaking of bread: And, as often as we eat the bread and drink the cup, be careful to shew the LORD's death 'till he come. The LORD is always present at his own table.

5thly and lastly, We may be said to gather together in the name of CHRIST, when we enter upon the duties of religion in his strength, and depend upon his atonement and intercession for their acceptance. When we come together to worship GOD in a dependence upon the Grace and Spirit of CHRIST for assistance, and upon his merit and righteousness for acceptance, regarding him both as our way to the Father, and Advocate with the Father, then are we met together in his name.— What JESUS told his Disciples we daily find true in ourselves, That without him we can do nothing. i. e. Nothing truly and spiritually good. But the weakest Christian may adopt the Apostle's words and say, I can do all things through CHRIST which strengtheneth me. We must be strong in the LORD and the power of his might. All our sufficiency is
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of him. Strong in the Grace that is in CHRIST JESUS, we can perform every duty, defeat every adversary, and patiently endure the most grievous and weighty afflictions. If we go at all, we must go in the strength of the LORD GOD, and make mention of his righteousness, even of his only.—When the stripling David went out to meet Goliath the Philistine giant, he said, I come to thee in the name, i. e. in the strength of the LORD of Hosts, the GOD of the Armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. And in the 20th. psalm he says, the name, i. e. the strength of the GOD of Jacob defend thee; and again, In the name, i. e. in the strength of our GOD, we will set up our banners; And again, Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name, i. e. the strength of the LORD our GOD. And, after all our best services, performed in his strength, we must reckon ourselves unprofitable servants. Our persons and performances are accepted in a way that for ever excludes boasting from us, and secures all the praise to the glory of GOD's free and boundless Grace. In the name of JESUS our petitions must be offered, and our praises accepted; Yea, whatsoever we do in word or deed, we must do all in the name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. *John 14. 10. Col. 3. 17.*

I now proceed in the

II. place, to point out the purposes for which CHRIST will be present, where two or three are gathered together in his name.

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I would observe in general that his designs in being present at such meetings, are the most kind and gracious. In *Job* 1. 6. we read of a certain day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and it is said that Satan came also among them. He continues to do the same still, when the sons of God meet together. But his designs are unkind and malicious. He comes, not to promote, but prevent devotion. Where the seed of the kingdom is sown, he comes to sow tares and dissention. He, the wicked one, comes, as is said of him in respect of the way-side hearers, to take away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But JESUS is not the wicked one. He is the Holy One, and the Just. He is not an adversary, but a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. When he comes among his waiting servants, it is not, like Satan, to disturb the calm; but, like himself, to allay the storm. When he says It is I they have no cause to be afraid.—But more particularly I would remark in the

1st. place, That CHRIST is in the midst of his assembled saints, to observe and approve their intentions. He comes to view his guests,—to see that they have not left their hearts behind, but are all present, hungering and thirsting for the provisions of his house. To see that they are not assembled from motives of curiosity, or any other carnal gratification; but, that while they have fellowship one

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with another, they may at the same time have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son JESUS CHRIST. These pious intentions he is present to approve, and to give them their heart's desire. He will be present, I note

2ndly, To supply all their wants. They lack wisdom, and as his Disciples, come unto him for instruction. They sit like Mary at his feet; and in so doing, they do wisely; for he is a Teacher come down from GOD, and knows all things. He is an interpreter, one among a thousand, and will not only open his mouth to give them instructions, but likewise, their understandings to receive the same. He will daily instruct them more perfectly in the things that belong to their everlasting peace. Learning of him they will become better acquainted with the evil of sin, the worth of their souls, the vanity of the creatures, and the devices of Satan. They will grow in Grace and in the knowledge and love of JESUS CHRIST. They will learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart, and so find rest unto their souls. As he will be in the midst of them to instruct, so likewise to strengthen them in every thing that is good: In their zeal against sin, and for the truth as it is in JESUS. In their opposition to the world, and conformity to himself. In their resolutions and purposes of heart to cleave unto the LORD. In their desires and endeavours to glorify GOD and be with him in Heaven. In a word, he will be in the midst to bless them with all spiritual blessings.— Do they come to seek the blessing of pardon? They shall find him present with power to forgive sin, and bid

bid them go in peace. He will give them redemption through his blood; strong consolation; yea, everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace. Do they come with their prayers and sacrifices of praise? He will be in the midst, as the altar on which they may be offered with acceptance. They come hungry, and he is in the midst of them as the true manna, the bread of life, that they may be fed. They come thirsty and he is in the midst as the water of life, wherewith they may be refreshed. Sometimes it may be they come weeping, and find him in the midst to wipe their sorrows dry.—What shall I say more? They come empty, and find in him a rich plenitude of every thing that is good and desirable. O for such times of refreshing from the presence of the LORD! In the esteem of all who have been favored with them, they are better than life itself.

BUT it may be proper here to observe, that although CHRIST be always in the midst of two or three who are gathered together in his name, yet they have not always the same comfortable manifestation thereof. Sometimes he hides his smiling face, even in his ordinances. He is sought and solicited as he once was by the woman of Canaan, and for a time answers not a word; and when he does, rather gives a repulse, than an answer of peace. At such seasons, let us not suppose that he hath forgotten to be gracious: That he is worse than his promise. It can not be. His design towards us is the same as to the woman above mentioned. It is to stir up our desires after him, and exercise our

faith in his word; and when our patient and persevering importunity hath had its perfect work, the issue will be, as it was with hers, *O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* Sometimes JESUS brings us into his ordinances, as the Jews were brought into the wilderness, to be tried and humbled: To search and probe, as well as to heal the wounds of our souls. When we are gathered together to hear his word, he will be present to give us that portion which best suits our condition; and perhaps it may be a word of reproof, or sharp rebuke, which may prick us to the very heart; but all such powerful operations of the sacred word are blessed proofs of the SAVIOUR'S presence, and of his kindest intentions to our immortal souls.— This leads me in the

IIIId. and last place, to deduce some inferences from the whole. And

1st, From the words of our text I infer, that our LORD would have us conceive of him as being more than man; because he plainly speaks of being present in more places than one at the same time; saying, Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. If the words in *Exod. 20. 24, In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee,* express the Omnipresence of GOD, I should think the words of the text express the Omnipresence of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. It must be owned that they are intended to encourage persons in all places, to assemble together, in hopes of the presence of CHRIST; which
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certainly would be vain, if he were confined to one place, as every mere man necessarily is. To suppose, as some do, that our LORD only intends being present by his authority, as a King is said to be present in all parts of his dominions, where persons deputed to represent him, act by his authority, surely is not to give a sense of the words more consistent with the general language of the New Testament, than that which their plain literal meaning seems to convey; nor does it give a sense better calculated to promote the design of them, as tending more to excite and encourage persons in all places, to perform the great and important duties of social and public worship. Neither has it any tendency to represent the passage in a light more just, beautiful, and obvious; but, on the contrary, it enervates the force of the expression, making thereof mere tautology. Can we believe that the adorable JESUS, that great and eminent Speaker, of whom his very enemies were constrained to say, Never man spake like this Man,—is it possible that we can believe, that on a subject so very important and interesting, he would express himself in a style so empty, trifling, and careless, as the above supposition makes him to do? saying, Where two or three are gathered together in my name, i. e. by my authority, there am I in the midst of them, i. e. by my authority? Let us not attempt by such pitiful evasions, to set aside a doctrine so replete with consolation, as that of CHRIST'S Omnipresence is found to be, both by living and dying Christians. It is said of Satan, whose name is Legion, that he goes
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to and fro in the earth, walking up and down, and about, seeking whom he may devour; but JESUS, who is the destroyer of Satan, is every where present. Lo he is always with them that love him, particularly so, when they gather together in his name. I proceed to infer

2ndly, That if CHRIST will be present in *any place* where two or three assemble in his name, then we need not pay much attention to places. Yet alas! it appears, not only from the question proposed to JESUS by the woman of Samaria, but likewise by the conduct of persons in general, that it is natural to fallen man, to pay more attention to places and forms of religious worship, than to the intention, sincerity, and spirituality thereof. But, from our LORD's reply to the Samaritan woman; from his own general conduct, and that of his Apostles; from the words of our text, and the whole tenor of the New Testament; it manifestly appears to be at once both our duty and interest, above all things, in our worship, to see that it be such as GOD requires at our hands, and will accept from us. In a word, that we worship him in spirit and truth. They who prefer any worship, says Mr. Henry, merely for the sake of the place in which it is performed, though it were as magnificent, and as solemnly consecrated as the temple of Solomon, forget that the hour is come in which there is no difference, in GOD's account, between Jerusalem, which had been so famous for sanctity, and the mountain of Samaria, which had been so infamous for impiety. My brethren, the
question

question is not *where*, but *how* we worship the LORD? Let us labour therefore to be right in the essentials, as the most likely method to put an end to all strife about the circumstantial of our religion. The most effectual way to make up differences in the lesser matters of religion, says the above mentioned pious and pithy writer, is to be more zealous in the greater; and adds, that they who make it the matter of their care to worship in the Spirit, one would think should not make it the matter of their strife, whether their worship be performed here or there.—Christianity allows us to pray everywhere. All places are alike near Heaven. Certain ones however, for the purposes of social worship, if possible, must be had. Paul speaks of the members of the Church of Corinth coming together in one place. 1 Cor. 11. 20. And before that Church was planted, we read of an upper room into which the Apostles and Disciples went up, on their return from the ascension of CHRIST; perhaps the same room in which he had celebrated the passover and instituted the supper the night preceeding his death; and, as some think, the very same in which they were assembled with one accord on the day of Pentecost, when the HOLY GHOST visibly descended upon them. The primitive Christians were thankful for such places as they could obtain. Let us be so likewise. I will repeat what I have said before: Those are the best places of religious worship, which are best calculated for that purpose. I do not mean in point of grandeur and elegance, but decency and convenience. I trust you need not be told, that you have
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no more reason to hope for the divine presence in this place, than you had to hope for that inestimable favor, in the place in which you assembled before; yet as this is far more convenient, I most sincerely rejoice that you have it in possession; and congratulate you all on your present enjoyments and pleasing prospects in the matter of Gospel privileges. I think myself happy and greatly honored in having been at all instrumental to your good accommodation therein: And I thus publicly and sincerely thank all those generous souls, whether present or absent, who by their prayers and purses have most cheerfully given you their assistance in this most laudable undertaking.

SHOULD any of my hearers feel themselves inclined to despise this place of worship, because destitute of bells and steeple, quire and altar, with matters of that sort; I must take the liberty to tell them, that I doubt they would make poor companions for JESUS CHRIST, when he went about preaching the Gospel in *houses*, in *ships*, and on *mountains*; as likewise for his Apostles, when they were so much persecuted for their nonconformity to the religions established by men, in opposition to that which they had been taught by JESUS CHRIST. Let me inform such persons further, that we experience no inconvenience from the want of those things of which they make so great an account: And we recommend it to them, seriously to consider, that the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, as said the Prophets, but that he will look to the
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Man, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembleth at his words: Yea, that he is nigh to all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. I infer

3dly, That if CHRIST will be in the midst to bless those who are met in his name, then, as ever we would do good in our generation, we must use our utmost endeavours to promote such meetings. The GOD of this world, and ungodly men in it, have taken large pains to hinder such meetings; when they could do it by no other or more effectual way, they have attempted it by casting the foulest odiums upon them. It would be a shame for the servants of GOD to see his enemies more zealous to prevent than they are promote meetings for his worship.— With the unfruitful works of darkness they must have no fellowship. When sinners entice, they must not consent: But, they must be glad when others say to them, and as such, must themselves say to others, Come, let us go up to the house of the LORD. The more I have considered the great good resulting from meetings in the name of CHRIST, the more I am convinced that the promoting of them is, of all others, the very best charity. Those who have paid attention to the matter, will readily allow that the preaching of the pure Gospel, and the holy lives of the preachers of it, have, by the blessing of GOD, produced the most happy effects in many places. Persons in general have been greatly civilized and much reformed in their manners, whilst those in whom the good word has wrought effectually,

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have aspired to the highest pitch of Christian holiness. The habits of industry, sobriety, frugality, and prudence, to which the Gospel has a tendency to lead persons, will be found excellent preservatives against extreme indigence ; and if, by the visitations of God in his wise and unerring providence, some be greatly reduced, the same glorious Gospel will have a tendency to expand the hearts, and open the bowels of compassion, in those who are affluent, towards their necessitous and afflicted brethren. Suffer me for a moment to dwell on the blessedness of a preached Gospel. O how it is calculated to alarm the careless and secure sinner, to stop him in his mad career, and excite him to flee from the wrath to come ! How many have gone to the hearing of it with no better intention, than to ridicule and persecute ; but have returned unable either to gainsay or resist what they have heard : — Nay more, owning that they went with minds filled with prejudice and enmity against what they did not understand ; and that they have returned fully convinced, that the word of the LORD is quick and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword, it having pricked them even to the heart, and excited them to cry out, What must we do to be saved ? — Moreover, how is the Gospel calculated to heal the wounded spirit, and give effectual ease to the sin-troubled conscience ; setting forth the boundless riches of divine mercy and grace in JESUS the great propitiatory sacrifice, in whom there is pardon for the guilty, cleansing for the filthy, and compleat justification, even for all the ungodly, who believe
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in him! O how much better a sacrifice is here than those of the bulls and goats, than thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil; yea, than our first-born sons, were we willing to offer them for the sin of our souls! Thanks be to GOD for JESUS CHRIST! Once more, how is the Gospel calculated to succour the tempted, support the afflicted, and nourish the soul to life everlasting! In it are words both of precept and promise, caution, instruction, and consolation, which are, to all who receive them in season, as apples of gold in pictures of silver. They are sweeter than honey, and dearer than thousands of silver and gold. They are more than necessary food, they are marrow and fatness; yea, the joy and rejoicing of the heart.—They have been found to yield the sweetest consolation in the sharpest trials, and the most triumphant joy at the very hour of nature's dissolution.

4thly, If CHRIST will be present with them that meet in his name, then let us come together in the most lively hopes and expectations of his presence and blessing. Let us lose no opportunity for meeting in the SAVIOUR'S name; but beware of resting in a round of duties. A multiplicity of religious performances, unless religiously and properly performed, will be of no avail. When the temple worship was at its highest pitch of outward pomp, and rights and ceremonies most abounded, even then, the GOD of Heaven despised and rejected all those who rested in the bare performance of the outward services. My brethren, it must not suffice

us to say we have *so often* attended the house of God; but it must be our great concern to experience the enjoyment of his presence there. Nothing short of this will satisfy a real saint. Those who content themselves with a mere attendance on outward ordinances, and look upon those as deluded fanatics who speak of spiritual enjoyments and nearness to God, act a part unworthy of rational beings, and highly injurious to their own souls. What! Is it infallibly certain that none enjoy a sense of the SAVIOUR'S presence in his ordinances, because mere formalists in religion say, that they themselves do not? They have not come with any such desires or expectations; and is it any wonder that they have not found what they did not seek? Can they be proper and competent judges of what other people have found, who have sought in a way and manner quite different from theirs? Is it rational to admit their evidence in a matter of such importance, and of which they have no certain knowledge? Rather let us give ear to those who speak as the oracles of God, and say, We have drawn nigh to God, and he hath drawn nigh to us. We have sought him, and found him. We have seen his power, and glory in his sanctuary. He hath blessed the provisions of his house, and satisfied our souls with the choice dainties thereof. It is good for us to draw near to him in his ordinances. We love the habitation of his house. How amiable are his tabernacles! A day in his courts is better than a thousand. The one thing we will seek after, shall be to dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of our life, to behold

hold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. O happy souls, that are in such a state!—With them numbered may we be! I will now in the

Last place, conclude with a short word of advice to those who intend stately to worship the LORD in this place. My brethren, you will now be considered as a congregation of Protestant Dissenters. Suffer me to exhort you not to dissent either from the doctrine or discipline which JESUS hath established. If the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England were established by him, I flatter myself they would not be opposed by us; but of many of them, we are not able to find so much as the shadow, in the whole book of GOD: As such, we think our dissent from them, perfectly consistent with the allegiance due to CHRIST. You are now my friends, to call no man master upon earth, one is your master, even CHRIST, whose kingdom is not of this world. You have now the liberty to worship GOD according to his word, and the dictates of your own conscience, without any one daring to make you afraid. You have the liberty to choose your own spiritual pastors and teachers, as much as you have to choose your own lawyers and physicians. May you never be robbed *of*, but always divinely assisted *in*, the use of liberty! The eyes of many will be upon you, be it your concern that they may see nothing in you, but what they might wish to have done themselves, if lying on the bed of death.—Allow to others the liberty you take for yourselves; and

and as you call no man master, judge no man's servant. Leave all but yourselves to the decision of the last day. Finally, my brethren, be ye all of one mind to do good. Love as brethren. Live in peace : And the God of love and peace shall be with you. *Amen.*

THE END.



ERRATA.

- Page 6. Line 23—after be, place a comma instead of
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| 11 | 4—for meeting, read meetings. |
| | 26—instead of 2d. read 2ndly. |
| 13 | 12—for sympathifing, read sympathizing. |
| 18 | 3—instead of These, read Their. |
| 21 | 17—before mere tautology, place the article a. |
| 22 | 27—for Solemon, read Solomon. |
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